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# Assessment Findings and Recommendations

## *Meeks Bay Project*

July 15, 2020

# Stakeholder Assessment

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- **CBI** conducted an assessment on the Meeks Bay restoration & recreational access project
- **Purpose:** Assess perspectives on the future of Meeks Bay; identify areas of convergence and divergence; clarify key issues
- **Methodology:** 19 interviews with 26 people; high level, key themes summarized without attribution
- **Participants:** Broad range of stakeholders representing diversity of perspectives (see list in appendix)

# ASSESSMENT FINDINGS



**“Meeks Bay is a gem.”**



**“...one of the last places with an open view.”**



# 1. Interviewees Wish to Maintain & Enhance Meeks Bay's Unique Character

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Clear blue  
water

Serene

Quiet, slow  
pace

Scenic  
vistas

Safe, sandy  
beach

Wind  
protected

"Paddler  
oasis"

# 1. Interviewees Wish to Maintain & Enhance Meeks Bay's Unique Character

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Accessible for  
public day use

Open to all people  
of various  
backgrounds &  
levels of wealth

Family friendly

Beach barrier  
lagoon system

Culturally  
important for  
Washoe Tribe

Many families have  
deep history &  
connection

**“This effort should maximize  
the things we love about Meeks Bay.”**





## 2. Interviewees See Opportunity for Meeks Bay Restoration & Stewardship

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Interviewees described this effort as an opportunity to:

- Protect **water quality** to ensure the water remains clear
- Improve **creek function** to support **connectivity** between lagoon and upper watershed
- Reduce **sediment**
- Reduce **fuel loads & increase defensible space**, where possible
- Restore **habitat** to enhance species composition and **biodiversity**
- Eradicate **aquatic invasive species** (AIS) - milfoil, bullfrogs, warm water fish species
- Interface with and coordinate CalTrans **SR89 corridor planning** effort and other transportation planning efforts
- Enhance **interpretive signage** about Meeks Bay natural & cultural history (in partnership with Washoe Tribe)

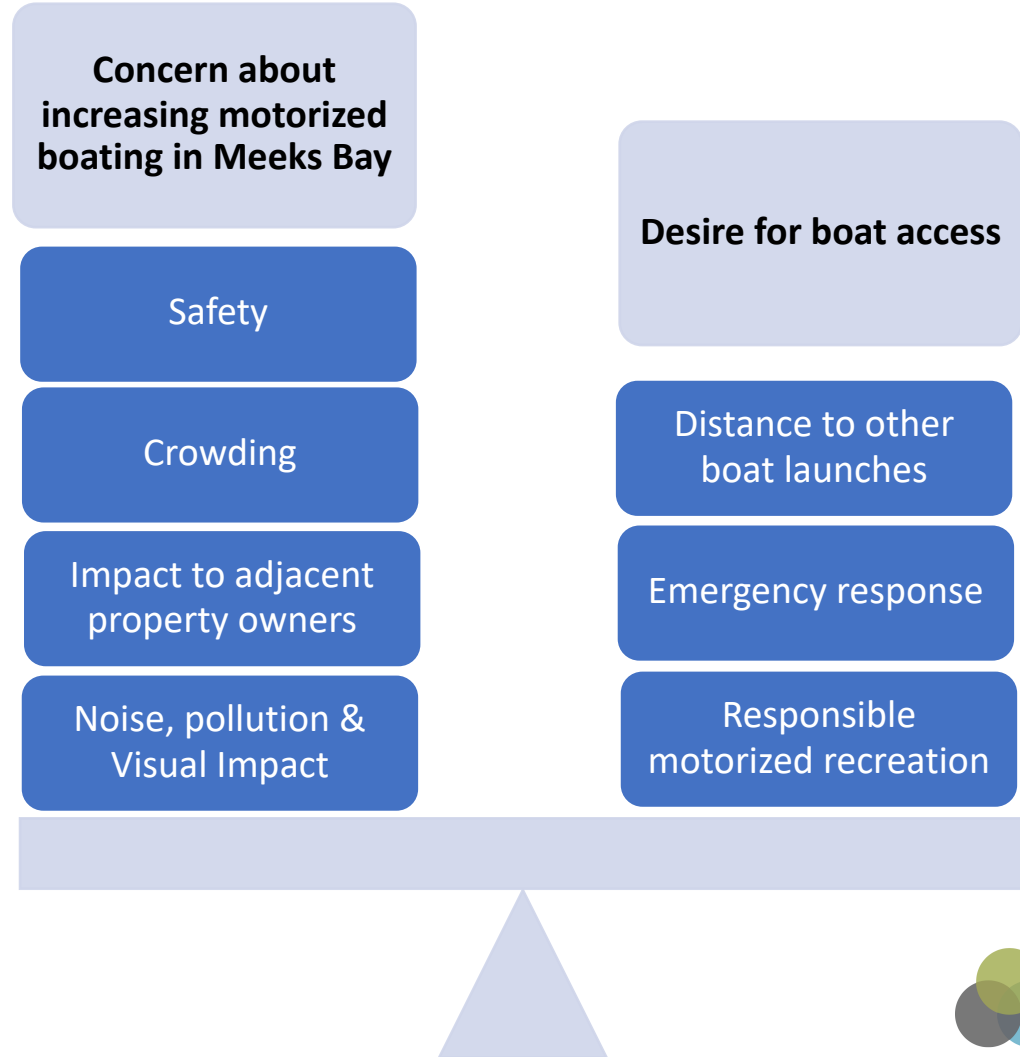
**“We have the opportunity to do this right  
to restore Meeks Bay.”**



### 3. Interviewees Shared Mixed Perspectives on a Prospective Pier

Many interviewees articulated a **preference for nonmotorized** recreation in Meeks Bay.

Yet some interviewees would like the **ability to put boats in the water** in Meeks Bay.



### 3. Interviewees Shared Mixed Perspectives on a Prospective Pier

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Many interviewees **expressed concern** about a proposed pier.

Some interviewees described the importance of a **public safety access pier** with dedicated space for emergency deployment.

Some suggested a **smaller pier**, perhaps designed for nonmotorized watercraft.

Interviewees would like to see **more details** about the proposed pier.

## 4. There is considerable resistance to placing a pier & boat launch in the southern section of Meeks Bay

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Interviewees cited the following reasons not to place a pier & boat ramp in the proposed location:

- Southern section of Meeks Bay is **quiet**
- Proposed location would involve **tree removal** & **loss of beach**
- Some perceive that this plan attempts to **fit too much** in a small area changing the character of Meeks Bay
- A pier and boat launch are **noisy** & **disruptive** (thus shouldn't be beside the beach or near adjacent private property owners)
- Increase in boat traffic would decrease **privacy** on beach and to adjacent property owners

“Boat ramps have **noise**, yelling, cars backing up, people hauling stuff in and out. It’s noisy and **disruptive**...It would disrupt the **serenity** [of Meeks Bay].”



## 4. There is considerable resistance to placing a pier & boat launch in the southern section of Meeks Bay

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Some - including motorized recreators - prefer to see a pier in the **north side** of Meeks Bay.

However, many people noted **physical constraints** in Meeks Bay that may limit possible placement options for a pier.

Several people suggested restoring the **existing boat launch**, which has a one-way, drive-through design for **traffic** management.

## 5. Many Interviewees Expressed Concern About Increasing Visitors to Meeks Bay

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Interviewees are concerned that a pier would draw increased traffic to Meeks Bay, thereby disrupting its **quiet, peaceful character**.

Some wish to enhance access and circulation for **low impact recreation** (bike, pedestrians, kayak, etc.)

Many articulated concern that **increased visitation** (due to motorized boating) would lead to:

- Further development
- Traffic congestion
- Inadequate emergency egress
- Negative environmental impact
- Decrease in privacy

Some interviewees cited development at Tahoe Keys, Zephyr Cove and South Lake Tahoe as examples of **what not to do**.

Some are concerned that there are more visitors to Meeks Bay than the **ecosystem** can sustain. These interviewees suggested using a **parks model** with a user-friendly interface to **equitably manage** the number of visitors.



## 6. Stakeholders Express a Specific Concern around Increased FIRE risk If Recreation Infrastructure is Expanded

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Stakeholders note that **Highway 89 is already a high-risk road in the case of fire**; increased visitation and boating traffic in particular would exacerbate these risks for visitors and local home-owners.

Stakeholders highlight the Gondola Fire and Cascade Fire of 2016 as examples of the major fire-risk that exists along the Highway 89 corridor.

In addition to mitigating fire risk by avoiding increased congestion on Highway 89, some stakeholders suggest specific **collaboration with local fire and rescue authorities** on projects that would increase public safety in the area.

## 7. Interviewees Expressed Concern About Visual Impact from Buoy Field

**NOTE - Though the Proposed Action did not include a buoy field and one is not proposed due to compliance with the Lake Tahoe Shoreline Plan, commenters shared the following concerns with any buoy field proposals:**

Interviewees expressed concern that **boat slips** from the decommissioned marina would be replaced by moorings in Meeks Bay.

Interviewees fear that this would **impair open views** that some describe as “pristine.”

Additionally, interviewees fear that a buoy field would compromise **safety** for nonmotorized recreators.

Some interviewees suggested **reopening/rehabilitating the Marina** as a model “green marina.” These interviewees cited:

- Aesthetic benefit (vs. buoys)
- Dependable revenue source
- Boat storage
- the marina avoids the need for a pier and boat launch
- The marina has historically provided crucial “safe harbor” for boats when storms roll in

**“Restoring the marina would have the least impact on the Bay, on views, on the beach users, on boaters, kayakers, and everybody else.”**



**“It will take away from the Meeks Bay feel  
if many moorings are put in.”**



# INFORMATION NEEDS



# Interviewees Suggest Considering a Range of Technical Information to Support Robust Alternatives Analysis & Decision-Making

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- Water levels, **shelves** & **sandbars**
- Size of various **user groups** (e.g. beach users, motorized boaters)
- More details about the **proposed pier**, including location, size, level and type of use, how it will be constructed
- **Anticipated boating activity** associated with pier & boat launch (day use vs. overnight; potential user conflicts)
- Boat and/or pier effect on **littoral drift** on shoreline
- **AIS control** (is RCD able to staff a boat launch inspection station?)
- Can we **fully restore bay** area & eliminate need for retaining wall?
- Impact of **SR89 bridge** on creek sinuosity and fish passage (current width vs. design alternatives)

# Interviewees Suggest Considering a Range of Technical Information to Support Robust Alternatives Analysis & Decision-Making

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- Impacts to **creek meander** if sheet piling is removed & creek mouth restored
- **Scenic** impacts
- **Noise, air & water quality** impacts
- Alternative with **reduced boater access** (no pier and/or no boat launch)
- Ecological benefits of **lagoon restoration** vs. available treatments for **marina reopening** & associated impacts
- Impact to quiet, safe, **nonmotorized access** (as is presently available)
- Impacts of **alternative locations for ramp and pier** (particularly on north side of Bay)
- **Campground** trends & demands
- **Parking & traffic circulation**
- Approaches to equitably **manage high demand** and **mitigate over-use**
- Existing conservation strategy for **Tahoe yellow cress**

**“Ensure things are right-sized and complementary.”**





# RECOMMENDATIONS: PUBLIC OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT



**“One of the biggest mistakes agencies make is not telling the public what’s going on.”**



# Communicate With an Open, Inclusive, Transparent Process to Build Trust

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## Communicate clearly, directly & transparently

- Clearly frame issues, timeline, opportunities for engagement

Seek **early, broad public input**, before the outcome is determined

- Present options as draft/work in progress
- Very polished proposals may be read as a “done deal”

## Use **descriptive messaging**

- Framing as a restoration project - when recreation & development are also significant components - can lead to public distrust

**“They can’t release public documents in October and then hold public meetings when no one is there to attend.”**



# Timeline & Schedule Must Support Summer Engagement

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Conduct public outreach & hold key meetings in the **summer**

- In-person public processes held in autumn & winter are perceived as disingenuous
- However, **virtual workshops** present opportunity for year-round engagement

Aim for **spring release** of key documents

- Target April or May release, followed by summer outreach

During off-season, continue to disseminate **monthly project updates**

- While the project will proceed year-round, routine email updates will support ongoing engagement & transparency

**“Because people love this place so much,  
they will be organized.”**



# Shape Public Outreach for Varied Ages & Technology Access

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**Interactive webpage** for public review and feedback

Communicate via **email** & **direct mail**

Provide on-site information via **signage**

On busy beach days, host an **information tent** and offer a **survey**

**Local media** coverage (print, radio, television)

# Shape Public Outreach for Varied Ages & Technology Access

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## Social media

- Partner organizations can share project information via Next Door, Facebook & other social media platforms
- Note that the lead agencies are unable to moderate discussion on third-party social media pages

Partner with **local entities** to spread word to their networks

- Washoe Tribe newsletters
- Water Trail and marinas can communicate to end users
- HOAs
- Tahoe Environmental Research Center
- Existing local committees and organizations

Hold **virtual** & **in-person meetings** (in summer!)

- Stakeholder Forum is open to public
- Public workshops (in-person & online)
- Online tools



**“Have a strong visual simulation partner to illustrate the options. People like seeing the vision. It gives them something besides white paper with text.”**

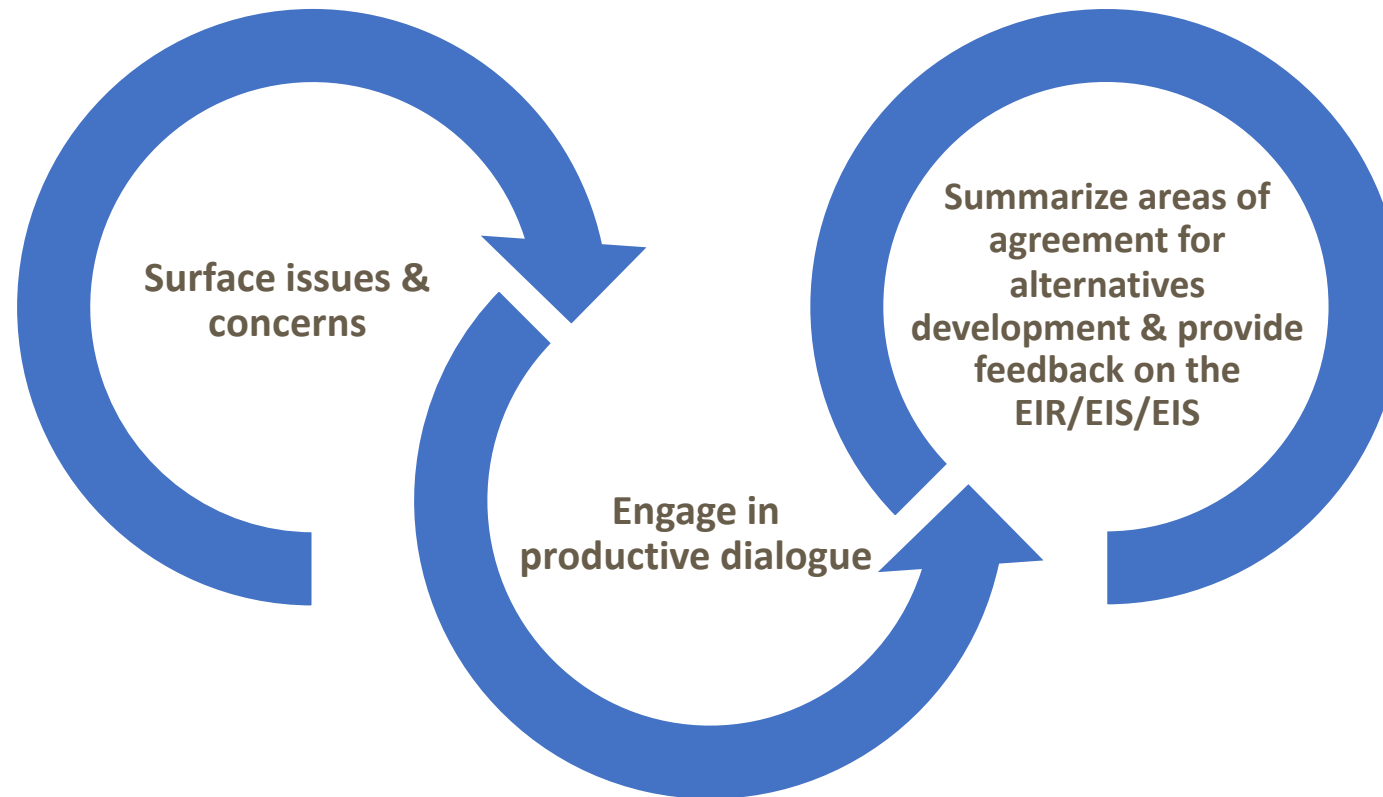


# RECOMMENDATIONS: STAKEHOLDER FORUM



# Stakeholder Forum Purpose

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9 facilitated sessions over the course of development of alternatives • Representation from a broad range of interests & perspectives

# Stakeholder Forum Principles to Establish a Foundation of Trust

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Encourage problem solving & issue resolution via **mutual gains approach**

Work closely with **technical team** from outset

Ensure **transparency**; sessions are open to the public

# Principle Elements of Mutual Gains Approach

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Separate  
**people**  
from the  
problem

Focus on  
**interests**,  
not  
positions

Invent  
**options**  
for  
mutual  
gain

Insist on  
using  
objective  
**criteria**

# Stakeholder Forum Participation Criteria

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Need **representation** from a **broad range of interests** & perspectives

- Washoe Tribe (environment & cultural)
- Residents
- Nearby/adjacent property owners
- Motorized recreators
- Nonmotorized recreators
- Environmental
- Day & weekend users
- Emergency response
- Agencies – in consultation role?

# APPENDIX



# Interviewees

INTERVIEWED	
California Land Management	Eric Mart
California State Lands Commission	Jason Ramos
California State Parks	Courtney Rowe
California State Parks	Silver Hartman
Friends of the West Shore	Jennifer Quashnick
Lake Tahoe Marina Association	Bob Hassett
Lake Tahoe Marina Association	Jim Phelan
Lake Tahoe Water Trail	Becky Bell
League to Save Lake Tahoe	Gavin Feiger
Local Resident	David Jonsson
Meeks Bay Resort original family owners	Daret Kehlet
Meeks Bay Vista Property Owners Association	Dick Renard
Meeks Bay Vista Property Owners Association	David Coward

Meeks Bay Vista Property Owners Association	William Magrath
Meeks Bay Vista Property Owners Association	Anthony Evans
Meeks Bay Yacht Club, Commodore	Steve Matles
North Tahoe & Meeks Bay Fire Protection District	Steve McNamara
Property Owner	Julie Hutchinson
Sustainable Community Advocates	Steve Teshara
Tahoe Lakefront Owners Association	Jan Brisco
Tamarack Mutual	Julie Lane-Gray
Washoe Tribe Director of Cultural/Language Dept. & Washoe Tribal Council member	Herman Fillmore
Washoe Tribe Vice Chairman & Manager of Meeks Bay Resort	Rueben Vasquez
Washoe Tribe Office of Environmental Protection	Susan Jamerson
Washoe Tribe Office of Environmental Protection	Rhiana Jones
Washoe Tribe Office of Environmental Protection	Coralee Ditman



# Interview Questions

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## Introduction

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself/your organization's history in the Lake Tahoe area and involvement with Meeks Bay related issues.

## Vision & Values

2. What do you value most about Meeks Bay and the surrounding areas? What's most important about Meeks Bay to you and/or your organization?
3. If you came back to Meeks Bay in 50 years, how would you know that the restoration and recreational access actions had been successful?

## Issues

4. What are your primary interests or concerns related to the proposed restoration and recreational access project at Meeks Bay?
5. What do you consider the opportunities and constraints associated with this site?
6. What issues would a successful Meeks Bay project address? What issues might others raise?
7. What types of disagreements or conflict would you anticipate might emerge during the development of design alternatives for Meeks Bay? How might those conflicts be addressed or resolved?
8. What can we learn from previous efforts in the Lake Tahoe Basin that might inform or improve this effort?
9. What political issues would you recommend that we be sensitive to as this effort moves forward? Whose support is essential?

# Interview Questions

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## Technical

10. What information would you like to have or what technical questions would you like to be answered as part of this effort? Who has the knowledge/expertise, and credibility to provide that information?

## Stakeholder Engagement & Concluding Thoughts

11. The engagement approach under consideration is to have a stakeholder committee (forum) help guide the development of design alternatives for Meeks Bay restoration and access. Who might you recommend to participate in the stakeholder forum and what primary interests/concerns do they represent?
12. What do you think are the most effective ways to communicate and engage with stakeholders such as yourself and the public about this project?
13. Is there anything else you think we should know or advice that you might offer? What other groups or individuals do you think are critical for us to speak with?